Sites of Resistance: All-Ages Music Venues in their Local and Theoretical Contexts

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Introduction

"My roommate and I… figured out which bus to take and busted into the scene. A year or so later, I set up my first show, and one of the bands we'd seen that [first] night played… man, I felt like a badass!" – Emma Rehm, Mr. Roboto patron, Pittsburgh[1]

In Spring 2005, the Hollywood zombie movie Silent Hill 2 was filmed on Colborne St. in Brantford, Ontario, Canada. A visit to Brantford clearly indicates why this location was chosen: it requires nearly no effort to transform downtown Brantford into a postapocalyptic ghost town. Most businesses along historic Colborne St. are boarded-up. Since collapsed ceilings and other major structural issues prevent new retail or residential growth, the boards have been painted over with murals of silhouettes of pool halls, cafes, and movie theatres. In one sequence from the film, the observant viewer can glimpse the building at the corner of King and Colborne, a former restaurant. Until some punk kid stole it, a screenprinted bedsheet hung in the front window: [2]

Figure 1: The Ford Plant in Brantford, Ontario circa 2006 (Jones)

[1] In Varner 166.
[2] Figure 1. From a Wavelength zine interview with Chris George, a FP collective member: *Q: "Can you explain the banner?" A: "Can you explain the silhouettes?"* (Sebanc 2006)

1 King St. is home to the Ford Plant, a registered not-for-profit organization presenting all-ages, alcohol-free concerts and arts events. Audience members are mostly minors and are often fiercely loyal to the venue and its volunteer staff. Their bands practice in the Ford Plant, their shirts are silkscreened in the basement, their art hangs on the walls. At any given time, between ten and thirty individuals help run the collective. Multi-platinum band Arcade Fire played the Ford Plant, twice.

While less common in Canada than in the United States and Europe, the Ford Plant model is not an aberration. A 2006 study by the All-Ages Movement Project (AMP), a Seattle-based non-profit advocacy and professional development organization, finds over 132 currently active institutions in the United States that fit all aspects of this model.[3] All-ages venues serve as nodal points for youth-focused grassroots music scenes. Myriad punk fanzines and, more recently, several published books (Edge 2004, O'Hara 2001, Azerrad 2001, Kinsella 2005, and more) have surveyed the development of the all-ages scene inside the punk universe. However, this story is rarely told outside the all-ages scene itself; journalistic depictions of music-based youth subcultures often focus on negative aspects like substance abuse and property distraction rather than constructive activity that might be formative of social, cultural, and economic capital. Similarly, subculture theory dealing with punk rock[4] or hip-hop can be so reductionist as to embarrass sociologists and punks alike[5].

We hope to work against this unfortunate trend as we present our paper's threefold argument, showing how all-ages venues resist and contradict basic assumptions behind

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[3] All-ages Movement Project "Directory." It actually finds 300 non-profit organizations facilitating youth engagement with musical culture in some way; of them, 132 fit the model referred to here.
[4] Hebdige 1979.
[5] Accounts of how punk rock is distorted by journalism are found in Kinsella 2004 and Edge 204; similarly, O'Hara's project in The Philosophy of Punk is to provide a punk methodology of historical and sociological subculture analysis in an attempt to overcome this reductionism. For a discussion of subcultural theories that favours a holistic approach, see Fischer 1995.

sociological, cultural policy and "creative cities" approaches to grassroots culture. All three discourses, we believe, fundamentally misrecognize grassroots arts activity; the nature and distribution of all-ages venues in the United States is proof positive. This paper uses literature review, geographical analysis, and a sound understanding[6] of the actual nature of all-ages venues to discuss the relevance of these institutions to cultural policymaking and sociological theories of social capital alike.

Our first section discusses the rise of all-ages venues in terms of a social movement, and posits the movement as a potential counternarrative to pessimistic visions of the future of social capital in youth communities. While Robert Putnam proposes that America has experienced a decline in social capital resulting from a lower participation in public or group activities, the general trend he identifies does not hold for the arts, where participation is growing rapidly.[7] We believe that much of this participatory growth is occurring in grassroots music, especially punk and hip-hop.[8]

Economic geographers and cultural policy theorists find it difficult to capture the informal and amateur arts sector. Seminal cultural policy scholar Joan Jeffri aptly calls this sector a "hidden population."[9] In our second section, we discuss the definitional and methodological issues in cultural policy that lead to the overlooking of grassroots, participatory, youth-oriented art worlds like those surrounding all-ages venues.

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[6] We owe this sound understanding to the methodologies and ideologies of some of our cited authors. Special thanks are required to the University of Chicago's Fiscal Austerity and Urban Innovation project and Dr. Terry Clark, under whom the original iteration of this paper was supervised; to the University's Cultural Policy Center and Dr. Lawrence Rothfield; to the All-Ages Movement Project and Kevin Erickson & Shannon Stewart; and to the Ford Plant and Tim Ford.

[7] Clark, Achterberg and Navarro 2007.

[8] Rothfield *et al* 39; there are over 5 million self-reported bands in the U.S. on Myspace alone, of which Rothfield *et al* have isolated at least 300,000 true cases of active bands; this figure is bigger than the RAND Corporation estimates the entire size of the amateur arts sector to be.

[9] Jeffri 2001 1.

Our third section places the rise of all-ages venues in the context of the "creative class" discourse on urban development. Theorists engaging with ideas of creative cities, neo-bohemianism, *et cetera* often promote grassroots cultural activity as a means to economic growth but sometimes engage in a fundamental misrecognition of what that activity actually looks like. Lloyd presents Chicago's Wicker Park as a case study of a neighborhood conducive to 'neo-bohemianism' and therefore creative class-derived economic growth; we find the amenity components of neighborhoods like Wicker Park to actually be negative predictors of all-ages venues, and are suspicious that Brooks, Florida *et al* confuse amenities like chic dance clubs, boutique coffeeshops, and well-decorated streets with grassroots cultural life and the amenities and businesses that support it.

In order to place all-ages venues within their urban contexts, we turn to the framework of amenities-based analysis pioneered by Terry Clark and the University of Chicago's Fiscal Austerity and Urban Innovation project. We find that these organizations behave like weeds, thriving in areas abandoned and ignored by municipal policymakers. Nearby amenities, arts jobs, and high rents are all conventional signs of flourishing culture – but are negative predictors of all-ages venues. Instead, these all-ages venues comprise a set of "sites of resistance" across the country, encouraging youth social capital, leadership development and political organization in anti-corporate, communitarian, and ethically-rooted milieux. Again, this is not a fringe or isolated phenomenon; these institutions are pervasive, operating above and below the radar in over 100 American communities.[10]

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[10] There are relatively few venues like this in Canada but many more in Europe, often anarchist live-work "squat" spaces. The European squat tradition has defined European punk tours since the sixties, as Azerrad reports (2001) Simultaneously, as Shannon Stewart reports, legitimate, government-subsidized above-the-radar venues are becoming increasingly more common in Europe, and often receive government support, than US venues. The European influence directly resulted in Stewart's founding of Seattle all-ages venue, the Vera Project. No accurate European or Canadian counts exist.

DIY, Jamming Econo, and All-Ages Subcultural History

In order to understand how social (and economic) capital form in the all-ages scene, it is necessary to understand its history, philosophy, and methods of operation. While no official history of the all-ages venue scene has been published, insights into its development can be gleaned from two recent waves of literature about punk history and theory. While the first wave of punk scholarship – call it the "England's Dreaming" period - essentially began and ended with discussions of the 1977 British punk rock scene,[11] a second wave emerged in the early 2000s that provided insight into the mid-80s rise of American Hardcore and punk cultures, whose products are faster, louder and more dogmatic than their British counterparts[12].

The latter wave of literature agrees with a common trope of touring bands: the punk scene which spawned all-ages venues is fundamentally indebted to a "do-it-yourself," anti-corporate, low-overhead approach to touring the United States. Emblematic inspirations are Black Flag and the Minutemen; influential documents include *Maximum RockNRoll* magazine, Henry Rollins' memoir Get In The Van and historian Michael Azerrad's Our Band Could Be Your Life.

Since this DIY approach dominates all-ages venue practice, a brief sketch of its origins is valuable. The DIY pioneers were instrumental in developing a touring network for independent or emerging non-cover artists; the establishment of this network necessitated new non-traditional venues, a demand that fostered the creation of many early all-ages venues. The

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[11] The leaders are Savage 1991 and Marcus 1990, drawing on primary articles like Parsons 1977.

[12] O'Hara 2001, Azerrad 2001, and Kinsella 2005 take much wider views of punk and its culture than do Savage and Marcus, sharing a tendency towards better ethnographical work and more primary interviews. As well, the "scene leaders" of American Hardcore, like Fugazi's Ian Mackaye, the Dead Kennedy's Jello Biafra, D.O.A.'s "Joey Shithead" Keithley and Black Flag's Henry Rollins are prolific publishers and theorists about punk in ways that the first British wave are not.

historical narrative follows; a narrative that's taken on a mythological status among all-ages venue participants, and informs business practice.

During American hardcore's nascence in the early eighties, unsigned or unpopular bands rarely if ever toured outside their immediate region. Black Flag's Greg Ginn, head of archetypal punk imprint SST Records, used social networking and the phone numbers on record sleeves to blaze trails for the hardcore band's dream; a national tour. With assistance from D.O.A and the Dead Kennedys, Ginn booked his band in many cities that had never hosted punk shows before[13]. The early Black Flag tours earned the band a reputation as "the Lewis and Clarks of the punk touring circuit, blazing a trail across America that bands still follow today."[14] 'Punk houses' like Dischord House sprang up across the country to provide hospitality (and sometimes informal concert spaces) for this newly-mobile bands. Previously-hermetic regional subcultures began to overlap (if not cohere), organized around shared loves of the original American pioneers – or once in a while, shared hatred for Dischord Records' flagship band, Minor Threat.[15]

The Minutemen of San Pedro, California were explicit proponents of the so-called DIY ethos – a "do-it-yourself" commitment to low-overhead self-sufficiency, eschewing managers, publicists, recording engineers, producers, roadies, guitar techs, van drivers, et cetera. The Minutemen combined Black Flag's barnstorming with strict fiscal conservatism. (Just as importantly, the band had day jobs – "econo jobs" for their entire career.[16]) Their anti-corporate logic was not ideological but practical – DIY was cheaper and more effective. Their

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[13] Detailed in Rollins' Get In The Van (2004)
[14] Azerrad 25.
[15] Azerrad 140, 398.
[16] Mills.

approach to DIY was picked up and articulated on the other coast by Ian Mackaye of Dischord, Minor Threat, and later, superstar punkers Fugazi.

DIY's ideological dominance over the punk community led to an explosion of new bands (low overhead), self-published fanzines (incitement to discourse) and new venues. These venues were not beholden to the paranoid or unreliable nightclub owners that often served as gatekeepers to a local music scene. Rather, they were "operated by individuals who had been drawn into music-related businesses by a dissatisfaction with the oligopolistic practices of the national [music] industry," with a shared ethical focus on individual responsibility, maximum market choice[17], low-overhead living, and personal sincerity.[18]

Coupled with the increased demand from both bands and fans for touring and local performances, the all-ages venue was the logical extension of this communitarian, anti-corporate form of doing business. Launched by iconic fanzine Maximum Rock N' Roll in 1986, the Gilman St. Project took over an empty warehouse and made it an epicenter of the alternative music community in Berkeley, CA. Over the past 22 years, as Brian Edge chronicles in his 400-page oral history of the venue, it's hosted thousands of concerts, been a live-work space for administrators, musicians and squatters alike, and, as almost all of the 74 subjects interviewed for the book indicate, has "changed lives."[19] It's also hosted AA meetings, political rallies, free HIV tests, DIY skill-sharing workshops, voter registration sessions, and the annual "punk prom." Every first and third Sunday, public meetings are held

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[17] As noted earlier, for a bunch of anarchists, punk practice is often markedly ideologically conservative. It's not surprising, then, when standoffish, often xenophobic attitudes arise within a punk scene, as Edge and O'Hara chronicle. "Unity" is a scene slogan, but those who shout it the loudest, like Agnostic Front, are often deeply racist and dogmatically patriotic bands opposed to plurality of participation. Weird!

[18] Shank 218. Shank's Dissonant Identities is an exhaustive ethnographical account of identity-formation, the ethics of sincerity, and anti-commercialism over thirty years of music scene development in Austin.

[19] Edge 1.

that collectively determine Gilman governance, promotional, and conduct policy[20]. Each member is invited – as membership ($2) is a prerequisite for admission. So depending on the year and the size of the membership rolls, between 500 and 12,000 individuals, mostly youth, are invited to participate in a co-operative governance process. Coordinators are volunteers, often kids as young as fourteen. Gilman is the oldest all-ages venue in the United States and is emblematic of both the model's strengths and weaknesses. It continues to inspire kids to start their own venues, and has influenced a great many of the organizations catalogued by AMP.[21]

While both have deep roots in the punk community, neither DIY practice nor all-ages venues are exclusively punk phenomena. A generation of youth has grown up listening to bands or rappers that espouse independent entrepreneurship and direct action; it's no surprise that these influences are visible in their community organizing. By the mid-90s, hip-hop had decisively replaced punk as the *lingua franca* of youth subcultural agonism;[22] luckily, the "four elements"[23] vision of hip-hop culture all valorize participatory community involvement. AS220 in Rhode Island, Batey Urbano in Chicago, The Spot in Colorado, and Youth Movement Records in Oakland are all founded by individuals or co-operatives with no espoused punk background; rather, their models come from mainstream youth culture. Similarly, hip-hop productivity has most often hailed from inner-city *'hoods* and *barrios* home to restless, disadvantaged youth. Hip-hop culture is also profoundly regionalized, with its sound, subject matter, and marketing defined by its point of origin (dirty South, Atlanta, South

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[20] Some minutes from these meetings are appended to this paper, found in Edge 375.
[21] Edge 3.
[22] For an explication of hip-hop's development as a social movement, see Chang's Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation (2005), the consensus pick for best piece of hip-hop scholarship extant. Watkins 2005, a close runner-up, also looks at hip hop as a social movement with a more explicit force on mobilization, participation, and commodification in youth culture.
[23] In the four elements vision, DJing, emceeing, graffiti writing, and breakdancing are all equally important; with the possible exception of DJing, they can be done anywhere, at any time, by anyone conversant with the conventions of the genre.

Central, Bronx, etc). Racialization aside, these ingredients are similar to those at the origin of British punk.

The local, participatory foci of hip-hop, and its often-disadvantaged constituency make it important territory for service institutions like all-ages venues: projects like Youth Movement, the Spot, and Toronto's Remix Project teach their constituencies about entrepreneurship and self-responsibility through cultural production (recording studio programs, compilation CDs, workshops). Like punk venues, they provide safe, drug-free places to hang out after school and attend shows at night. Hip-hop all-ages venues are just as significant as punk ones in building social, cultural, and individual capital inside underserved populations.

Hip-hop subcultural identity does differ from punk identity in one respect – it refuses marginalization, arguing non-stop for the place of the hip-hop individual (often rhetorically figured as drug pusher) in mainstream American economic life. Li'l Wayne, Jay-Z, and Kanye West, today's three most famous rappers, all rap about self-made economic success – the "hustlin'" narrative of hip-hop.[24] These are mainstream, very American images of "success;" the youth trying to emulate them are attempting to escape the margins through distinction (emceeing skill), social capital (being recognized by their peer group) and economic capital (hustlin' money). Sociological visions of subcultural theory are inadequate here.

Punk and hip-hop do not have exclusive grips on all-ages venues; the AMP survey turns up a majority of venues that provide multi-genre programming, and venues like the Ford Plant, Chicago's AV-Aerie, LA's Smell, and others are famous for indie rock, noise-rock, electronica, and other musical sounds. However, these twinned agonist youth subcultures and

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[24] Chang 102.

their self-reliant, politically-charged ethoses have defined the DIY culture subscribed to by these non-profit, community-oriented venues; understanding their roots and the communities they serve is crucial to understanding their functions in urban and community contexts.

All-Ages Venues and Social Capital Discourse

Before briefly turning to a discussion of how all-ages venues fit within existing academic paradigms of social capital and urban development, it seems important to mention exactly what all-ages venues do. We defer to the All-Ages Movement Project's analysis of their survey data:

> **Within these programs, organizations are producing anywhere from one concert a month to five a week. Many are also producing records and releases, anywhere from one to five a year. *The most consistent guideline cited among organizations for selecting artists was having zero tolerance of anything racist, sexist, or homophobic in nature*, demonstrating an intentional move towards using public platforms to model socially positive and progressive values. Otherwise criteria for selecting artists range from directly recruiting youth who are active in the organization, to working with national booking agents to book touring artists and pair them with local emerging artists.[25]**

As the AMP report points out, the practice of intentionally using popular music and culture to engage youth in direct or indirect action is relatively new. The traditional concept of "culture," as articulated by a Raymond Williams or a Matthew Arnold, suggests that the only way the arts can change lives is by developing the aesthetic sensitivities of the recipient. The canon of the high arts confers a sort of individual uplift - 'being cultured.' This is obviously not the spirit in which these all-ages venues are operating. Their grassroots practices envision and enact industry, democracy, class, art, and culture – all of Williams' terms from his Sociology of Culture – in new ways. It is not surprising, then, that much more scholarship

[25] All-Ages Movement Project Report 10.

discusses classical and jazz audiences than these youth-oriented alternative musical settings:[26] they are new and incongruent, with different frameworks of distinction[27], conspicuous consumption (ratty Black Flag shirts, new Jordans, cigarettes) [28], and social and (sub)cultural capital.

Robert Putnam posits a recent decline in community participation and social capital; however, Clark, Achterberg, and Navarro (2007) counter this with evidence of a rising participation in cultural activities, especially by the young.[29] Many cultural policy analysts argue that increased cultural participation is highly correlated with the development of social capital. Simultaneously, Clark and Silva (2008) argue that alternative forms of political legitimacy are arising globally, often oriented around shared symbolic activities like cultural consumption rather than the traditional fora Putnam cites like political parties, Lions Club membership, et cetera. In this light, the proliferation of all-ages venues becomes significant, as part of a wider counternarrative to these academic discourses.

38 of the 51 organizations surveyed by the All-Ages Movement Project considered civic engagement to be an integral part of their activities.[30] Of those 38 organizations, 87% considered peer-to-peer networking to be an integral part of their programs; 74% provide space for civic engagement and politically oriented gatherings; 53% are organized in a non-hierarchical structure that promotes activist involvement. Perhaps most interestingly, 50% said

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[26] The work of Alan Stanbridge is tremendously successful in applying sociological theory to avant-garde music, showing the lack of congruence between existing visions of culture and the way the arts are currently operationalized. "The Tradition of All the Dead Generations" relates this fundamental bias in scholarship and musicology to eventual grantmaking practice.
[27] Bourdieu 1984.
[28] Veblen 1899.
[29] Clark, Achterberg and Navarro 2.
[30] All-Ages Movement Project Report 2. The other thirteen organizations probably have some element of civic engagement occurring as a result of their programming, it simply does not comprise an official part of the organization's mandate.

that elected officials leverage their relationships with the venues to come across to constituents as supportive of youth issues. And fifty of those fifty-one respondents suggested that their organizations result in "alternative leadership development;" this may include formal leadership training (50%), program planning and implementation (70%), youth staffing or oversight positions (42%). These two performance indicators – civic engagement and alternative leadership development – provide a counternarrative to Putnam's story of declining youth interest in face-to-face bridging and bonding activities.

Further insight into the peculiar nature of this case, and how it relates to individual agency and social capital development in youth culture, can be discussed by juxtaposing all-ages practice with some canonical cultural theory. The Frankfurt School suggests that the mass-produced homogeneity of Culture Industry products alienate the listener from the actual construction of the artwork.[31] All-ages venues, again, provide a counternarrative. The 'dissolution of the audience-performer barrier' is a common trope in punk commentary; it comes up frequently in the Gilman book, as well as in O'Hara's discussion of punk in performance. A few characteristic moments: singers often fling themselves into the audience; the almost universal lack of backstage areas at these venues forces band members to mingle with patrons. Early graffiti on the Gilman walls read "FUCK ROCK STARS."[32] Finally, the relative simplicity of the actual music made it easily accessible – it only takes a few hacks at a guitar and some enthusiastic yelling to cover a Ramones song. Coupled with he fact that all-ages venues are often desperate for local openers and offer practice facilities for collective members, this demystification of musical performance dramatically lowers the barriers to participation and creation for punk youth.

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[31] Adorno and Horkheimer 2003.
[32] Edge 122.

While less structurally oriented towards an encouragement of participation than punk music is, especially in performance, hip-hop has similar effects; as Nas reminds us, "all I need is one mic."[33] Drop-in recording facilities exist at the Remix Project, The Spot, and many others; simultaneously, Myspace lists 2.5 *million* self-reported hip-hop projects extant worldwide[34]. The best data set of cultural participation in the United States available, the 2002 Survey for Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) does not report participation in or production of any of hip-hop's four elements, yet hip-hop is quite obviously definitive to contemporary youth cultural experience. Putnam's measures of cultural participation are drawn from the SPPA, as well as the General Social Survey (GSS) and the World Values Survey (WVS). Since the SPPA does not sample individuals under age eighteen, this data set excludes youth participation and social capital formed therein. Hip-hop is just one of many areas where a participatory art form that is fundamental to mainstream youth culture is overlooked by Putnam and others in sociology and cultural policy.

We draw on Taber's notion of punk self-marginalization to discuss the problems of accurately capturing the breadth of participation in all-ages venue activities. However, this idea of self-marginalization also has significance within discourses of social capital, manifesting as distrust of mainstream institutions and of authority at large. Edge's oral history of 924 Gilman details the venue's tumultuous history with city authorities, the police force, et cetera; the AMP survey finds only 15 of 51 respondents reporting a supportive relationship with local police and fire departments. This mistrust of authority perhaps suggests that the

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[33] Nas, "One Mic." Indeed, lots of hip hop youth don't even need that – "ciphers," or freestyle, a capella rap circles, flourish in parking lots, outside middle schools, on subways…
[34] Myspace.com.

social capital developed by all-ages centers might be anti-authoritarian; indeed, the anti-police, anti-government tropes of much punk, metal, and hip-hop[35] indicate this.

We suspect that this anti-authoritarian impulse in the content presented at all-ages venues is tempered by the political benefits of its participatory culture. Specifically, the way content is delivered by all-ages venues results in a corpus of youth trained to organize, make decisions collectively, and take the reins of production for themselves. Putnam may not approve of the type of social capital that is built in all-ages venues; while 'bridging' social capital certainly takes place (Edge and Varner both discuss the potential for diversity in all-ages audiences), 'bonding' capital is more likely, given the small-mindedness and genre-exclusivity that are definitive to punk and hip hop scenes alike.[36]

We contend that all-ages venues fit better within the paradigm of Clark's New Political Culture than with the paradigm of declining social capital espoused by Putnam's Bowling Alone. In the New Political Culture, a rising spirit of individualism, issue-based politics, identity politics, and distrust of conventional political formations are hallmarks. These trends are overrepresented in youth. All-ages venues are highly politicized environments; political zines, pamphlets and monographs are often sold off merch tables (led by imprints like AK Press and Arbeiter Ring Publishing), Rock Against Racism benefits are common, and the aforementioned zero-tolerance of 'politically incorrect' lyrical stances are definitive. However, these politics do not necessarily follow traditional party lines. The music scenes that most often occupy all-ages venues feature defiantly leftist stances on social issues coupled with a fiscally conservative DIY ideology. Clark's New Political Culture is alive and well in

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[35] Jelani Cobb (4) calls this the "self-fulfilling prophecy of bad motherfuckerdom;" in short, a mainstream that demonizes troubled youth as "bad motherfuckers" results in a cohort of youth who privilege an anti-mainstream identity of being a "bad motherfucker." This identity, of course, is fundamental to gangsta rap.
[36] Varner 167.

these venues; its theory captures the political dimension of these civic engagement and alternative leadership development activities, providing a counter-narrative to Putnam's fears.

Mapping All-Ages Venues

Our third section, then, takes advantage of the AMP directory of currently-active all-ages venues that subscribe to this framework of youth capacity development via participatory cultural infrastructure. It will place this directory in the context of economic geography and urban development literature spearheaded by Florida, Currid, Lloyd, et cetera. Just as all-ages venues resist an easy absorption into the paradigm of social capital literature, we find that they also provide an intriguing counternarrative to the suppositions of "creative cities" discourse. Florida *et al* suggest that informal cultural activity is a bellwether of creative-class activity and subsequent economic growth. However, we find that arts jobs are actually a *negative* indicator of all-ages venue presence; if we widened the scope to include jobs in engineering or computer programming, as does Florida, this negative relationship would probably be even more pronounced. Rather, we find, all-ages venues exist where the harbingers of bohemianism and the hallmarks of the "creative class" do not, in urban neighborhoods abandoned by traditional cultural infrastructure.

In the context of this conversation, we turned to the All-Ages Movement Project's Directory in order to model the relationship between all-ages venues, amenities, and bohemian locations. The AMP directory, collected through hypernetwork sampling, is the only such survey of all-ages movement at a national level. We placed the AMP directory in dialogue with an index of American amenities created by the University of Chicago's Working Group on Scenes. This index has been compiled from the Yellow Pages and various other sources, organized by ZIP-code and coded with "scene profile" values. By breaking down the AMP

directory into a list of venues organized by zip code, we were able to run them against the Scenes data indices. This provided rare insight into the sort of environments that encourage the operation of all-ages infrastructures, helping us determine where these venues flourish and what kinds of contexts allow them to do so.

From the 132 cases available from the AMP data set, 95 were selected as relevant to our study. Eliminated cases were generally production collectives or interest groups with promotional mandates. While important in cultural participation, these groups do not occupy a single consistent location and thus would have the potential to distort results pertaining to specific infrastructure within localities. Other cases were eliminated on the grounds that they operate all-ages venues committed to social programs with no specific mandate towards hosting live music; again, these cases had the potential to distract from our focus on arts participation. Finally, a minimal number of cases were rejected for failing to return zip code data.

All-ages venues are obviously a very small part of the cultural activity that goes on inside a zip code – further, they self- marginalize, actively and intentionally resisting the commercial and economic trends that inform up their entrepreneurial context. We would not expect this statistical analysis to conclusively isolate a set of significant predictors of all-ages venues; all-ages venues are small fish in the big pond of a neighborhood. Many correlation analyses were indeterminate, suggesting that all-ages activity cannot be traced to a set of 'magic bullet' indicators of music scene activity like, for example, nightclubs, instrument stores, or youthful demographics. However, our analysis found a few hints: urbanity, lack of neighborhood development in the urban context, low per capita income, and low arts jobs all emerge as predictors of the presence of all-ages venues. These findings fit within our

discussion of the nature of these venues in the context of the literature on arts participation and urban development: all but the former remain counternarratives to the established theory.

Our first basic hypothesis was that all-ages venues would be located in places with more amenities, following Florida's suggestion that creative individuals are drawn to convivial, amenity-heavy locations. A cursory glance at the mean number of total amenities in ZIP codes with all-ages venues strongly confirms this hypothesis: the mean national average for total amenities within a ZIP code is 47.36, the mean number of amenities in ZIP codes with all-ages venues is 378.50.[37] Despite the large standard deviations of these means, this finding initially pointed to a positive correlation between venues and total amenities, which might support the notion that all-ages venues tend to operate in economically thriving areas with cultural infrastructure. Testing the direct correlation between all-ages venues and total amenities does not conclusively support this, returning a weak and statistically insignificant positive correlation.[38]

While these statistics suggest that all-ages venues might be positively associated with amenities-rich areas, the means are skewed by the urban/rural divide: all-ages venues require a fair amount of subcultural diversity in order to find an audience[39] and are therefore most often found in urban areas. When the correlation between all-ages venues and amenities is run while controlling for population density, the initial results are completely inverted, and a weak negative correlation between the two variables is demonstrated.[40] While not conclusive, the complete reversal of the correlation under stricter constraints suggests the positive relationship between amenities and all-ages venues is mediated by factors connected to urban environments

[37] Appendices 1 and 2.
[38] Appendix 3.
[39] Fischer suggests that due to the number of interrelated factors that establish subcultural diversity, it is more likely to find a diverse and populous range of subcultures in larger cities.
[40] Appendix 4.

- specifically, that while they are more often found in urban than rural areas, their location inside urban areas trends toward underdeveloped, amenity-light neighborhoods.

A multi-variable regression analysis gives this further credence: the total number of amenities proves to be entirely insignificant in connection to all-ages venues, whereas population density consistently returns a statistically significant positive connection. Perhaps most interestingly, per capita income is also significant, acting as a weak negative indicator of all-ages venues.[41]

In the real-world context, what does this mean? It confirms our belief that the rise of all-ages venues is a counternarrative to Florida's vision of urban development. These venues, and the social, political, and cultural participation they generate, are not connected to a series of related amenities and infrastructure, but stand largely outside the realm of arts participation as envisioned by thinkers like Florida. Instead all-ages venues offer a unique case in which the DIY ethos and related economic practices necessitate the minimization of costs. This in turn forces venues to operate outside the high-rent districts typically associated with thriving cultural scenes, and to instead occupy spaces on the fringes of urban life.

This view is supported by correlations between all-ages venues and median gross rent. While a basic correlation between these factors demonstrates no significant relationship, correlations controlling for other variables related to ethnicity, urban location, housing, and education consistently return a negative correlation with a significance as high as 0.131.[42] While the relative weakness of these correlations suggests other factors are at work, their consistently negative values support the proposition that high-rent deters all-ages venues. To go a step further – if all-ages venues have distinctly beneficial social functions but are deterred

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[41] Appedices 5-8.
[42] Appendices 9-15

and marginalized by high rent, often shunted, like Roboto in Pittsburgh, to areas that are inaccessible to many due to a lack of transport service, the cultural policy responses should be readily apparent: rent subsidy or forgivement, in-kind donation of infrastructure (as in the case of New York's ABC No Rio venue), et cetera.

This model and its relationship to Florida's 'creative cities' theory are elucidated by arts employment data. Arts jobs have an extremely significant positive relationship with median rent.[43] This fits the model of arts participation in which engagement is mediated by amenities clusters, which are generally situated in accessible, economically vibrant localities. All-ages venues do not fit this trend; controlling for various factors, all-ages venues consistently return a weak negative correlation with arts employment.[44] Therefore, all-ages venues are not located in the heart of thriving arts scenes, but are instead positioned in areas with little arts employment. If anything, the trendy, high-rent districts in which cultural engagement drives economic progress repel all-ages venues, whose economic limitations and DIY ethos add to their 'self-marginalizing' nature.

Another potential interpretation of this data, in light of discussions of the arts labor market, is that if all-ages venues are related to arts activity in a neighborhood, that arts activity comprises practices that rely on voluntarism or informal labor. Most all-ages venues themselves, for example, would not show up on this measure of arts jobs, as they are predominantly volunteer-run. Economically productive work in the grassroots scene is often 'under the radar,' absent from payroll records.

Our contention that all-ages venues are not linked to specific sets of clustered amenities is supported by analysis of the correlation between venues and the specific "scene profiles"

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[43] Appendix 16.
[44] Appendices 16-19.

enumerated by Clark et al[45]. The scenes approach envisions patterns in cultural participation not simply as abstract preferences, but as choices connected to lifestyle, self-definition, and the lived experience of individuals in physical space. Ranging from "NASCAR Bliss" to "LaLa Land Tinsel," Clark's profiles are notable for the incredibly diverse collection of value-defined amenities clusters they represent; they are also notable for their near-total lack of correlation with all-ages music scenes. Direct correlation tests find no significant relationship between venues and any of the twelve profiles[46]. Common sense, especially in light of the work of urban theorists like David Brooks (2000), might suggest that venues staging new and avant-garde music would be endemic to a bohemian scene profile, but the statistics conclude that all-ages venues do not position themselves within specific localities based on shared values or principles; rather, they are scattered across a wide range of American cities, serving sub-scenes within the larger neighborhood scene. Another explanation towards this is that all-ages audiences rarely reside in the neighborhood of the venue, especially when those neighborhoods are relatively underdeveloped; while values of the venue may be reflected in the values of its patrons, those patrons may be scattered over many neighborhoods, or perhaps still live with their parents and not have chosen the location of their first residence. Its exclusive ZIP-code orientation is one limitation of the scenes approach.

While all-ages venues provide a context for the artistic expression and social activism connected to bohemian culture, they do not locate themselves within bohemian areas; out of the twelve scenes, those connected to bohemian values and bohemian/bourgeois values place fourth and fifth respectively in terms of their connection to all-ages venue location.[47] Even

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[45] Clark 2007.
[46] Appendix 20.
[47] Appendix 21.

when controlling for population density and per capita income (two variables with statistically significant relationships to all-ages venue location) only the "Cool Cosmopolitanism" scene shows a significant relationship[48]. A cosmopolitan scene features multiple conflicting systems, and so indicates a multiplicity of competing influences rather than a coherent value-specific cluster.

Implications

Galloway and Dunlop argue that "creative cities" discourse mistakenly considers creative industries and arts industries to be synonymous.[49] Rather than being in lock-step, cultural industries, especially those in the arts, often gravitate to themes and areas that are anti-mainstream or anti-bohemian. Aesthetician and cultural critic Greg Sholette calls this "shadow art" in the "counter-public sphere" – work that spatially and aesthetically occupies territory abandoned by 'cool' and 'high culture' alike.[50]

In the context of all-ages venues, our findings fit within these theories; we find all-ages venues are less correlated with areas of economic growth and areas with arts jobs than they are with areas of economic stagnation. Recently, urban policy analysts are noting a trend towards policy intended to stimulate the growth of the "creative sector;" cultural economist David Throsby cautions against this, echoing Galloway and Dunlop's idea of definitional misrecognition. He worries that cities will mistake an investment in the creative sector for an investment that simultaneously provides targeted support to the grassroots arts sector. As shown by our findings on the location of all-ages venues, the grassroots arts sector may not

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[48] *Ibid.*
[49] Galloway and Dunlop 2.
[50] Sholette 3.

necessarily be located where the theory would posit it. It is easily overlooked or misrecognized.

Designing methodologies to accurately serve this sector, then, requires careful, targeted investigation and investment. In doing so, the unusual methods necessary to locate the informal arts sector need to be incorporated. The AMP's hypernetwork sampling has resulted in an incredibly useful database of amateur arts organizations. Chicago Music City by Rothfield *et al* presents a compelling example of a 'near miss' of excellent multi-method study design. Unconventionally holistic in its approach, the study maps presenting organizations, venues, and workforce populations across a full range of genres and cross-references them with nontraditional measures like critical and commercial success. It takes an extra step from similar studies like Wali *et al* 2001 and Jeffri 2006, comparing these findings across a wide sampling of cities. However, as previously discussed, Rothfield *et al* apologetically dismiss the 'grey matter' of the amateur and informal musical activity in Chicago, despite indications that this part of the sector comprises significant activity. Rothfield's choice is representative of the dismissal from both scholarship and cultural policymaking that keeps grassroots arts venues like our 132 all-ages venues on the fringes of invisibility. Social capital, urban development, and music scene growth are all inhibited by this. Without truly understanding the grassroots from which these successes grow, it seems misguided to enter into any cultural policy intended to sustain an arts sector.

This oversight has very real consequences for arts advocacy. Chicago Music City was commissioned by the Chicago Music Commission.[51] Since the CMC has been highly activist in advocating for grassroots music issues like the recent Chicago Promoters' Ordinance, a

[51] For background, see DeRogatis 2008.

proposed policy from the City that would drastically hamper the ability of independent and grassroots promoters, bands, and unincorporated arts organizations to produce live events, it seems unfortunate that the study they commissioned to provide them with advocacy ammunition ignores the sector for whom they are doing their best work. Similarly, the AMP's capacity-building tactics have helped its founder, Shannon Stewart, secure sustainable core funding from the city of Seattle for her own all-ages venue, the Vera Project.

In an attempt to redress some of these oversights in the cultural policy literature, we have attempted to provide a multi-method analysis of all-ages venues, placing a thriving amateur arts milieu in dialogue with its social and urban planning theory contexts. By first understanding the historical and current practices of these venues and their relation to social life, we can assess the significance of the statistical data available. Both the practices and the data present valuable counternarratives to accepted tenets of academic literature. While all-ages venues may not have massive direct economic impact, we feel the presence of these counternarratives is worthy of mention, and indicative of other lacunae not captured by academic analysis of arts activity. This analysis of all-ages venues, then, represents a step towards a wider understanding and appreciation of the salience of informal and DIY arts practice to the arts sector at large, and to the cultural policymakers who serve it.

The Ford Plant, Again, In Context

An archetypal Ford Plant show took place on 6 July 2006, on a particularly sticky day in a hot Ontario summer. Posted showtime was 6 PM. At 6:30, collective member and venue figurehead Tim Ford led a small assemblage of youths, band members, and a few others down to a parking lot behind an abandoned building. Nobody was in a particular rush for the show

to start: the headlining band mingled with the crowd,[52] the folks who drove from Toronto introduced themselves to the Brantford locals, kids and adults played handball in the parking lot. Ford played a short unamplified set, including two protest songs about his "murdered city" and its "stolen history;" immediately thereafter, Torontonian musician Steven Kado (under the *nom de rock* The Blankket) did an experimental performance and sound piece, broadcasting his own radical, electronic and noise-based deconstructions of Bruce Springsteen songs with a FM transmitter, sending them to boomboxes brought by the audience and scattered around the parking lot, then engaging the audience with dance and unamplified vocals.[53] The audience then returned to the Ford Plant, joined by a few more youths, to watch Toronto's Kids on TV – an electro-dance band whose lyrical themes concern gay rights and freedom of expression issues. The headliners, Montreal's Think About Life, played the un-air-conditioned venue until condensation literally dripped from the walls; they cut the set short because the lead singer, an epileptic, felt overtaxed. During the penultimate song, a torrential downpour began; crowd members ran outdoors during the finale, with minors and a few adults, mostly alcohol-free, dancing and stomping in the newly-formed puddles.

While these events sound esoteric, this scene is a perfect example of the all-ages model and resists assumptions and generalizations found in cultural theory. The show was booked by a volunteer (Ford), and promoted, staffed and attended by local youth, a minority of whom lived in the neighborhood of the venue. Due to the informality and social focus of the concert, especially the pre-concert activities (Frisbee, handball, mingling, introductions), many Brantford youths met Kado, head of Blocks Recording Co, a non-hierarchical, collectively-run,

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[52] Think About Life's Graham Van Pelt: "Downtown is like totally destroyed, there was like no one there, but there were concerts behind abandoned factories. It was awesome." (Mountzouros 2006).

[53] Appendix 23. The songs were released on an album appropriately titled "Be Your Own Boss," inspired by leftist theory and the Frankfurt School. "Be Your Own Boss" was put out by workers' collective Blocks Recording Collective, Toronto's best example of a non-punk collective inspired by DIY.

registered non-profit. The Ford Plant volunteers exchanged best practices with Kado; both bridging and bonding experiences took place on both organizational and individual levels. Performances took place that challenged political (Ford), aesthetic (Kado), and normative/gender (Kids on TV) assumptions; it ended with a motley and diverse crowd, covered in sweat, dancing to an avant-garde band fronted by a hip-hop vocalist (a second-generation Haitian-Canadian).

Our paper's first section discusses how this scene represents a historically-consistent model of venue functioning, exemplary of new, non-Putnamesque models of social capital development. Our paper's second section discusses how this entire night – run by volunteers, un-accounted and paid in cash, participated in by people who do not report to the census as arts employees, or are too young to be surveyed by the SPPA – would fly under the radar of cultural policy scholarship and therefore be invisible to most advocates and policymakers. Finally, the Ford Plant is located in a derelict downtown, bereft of active businesses, amenities, or arts jobs; it is established there due to low overhead and available space. This is exactly consistent with our findings in the paper's third section. Therefore, this case study of a very unusual venue is not an esoteric example; it is a benchmark of what all-ages venues actually do.

These scenes are visible in hundreds of venues across North America and Europe. The activities therein are highly salient to our understandings of social capital, cultural policy study, and urban development alike. While they resist easy scholarly capture, they must not continue to be overlooked; rather, they should be celebrated and supported by academics and policymakers alike.

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